United Nations

Centre against Apartheid

Notes and Documents

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STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA (ANC)

[Note: This issue, which is published in accordance with General Assembly resolution A/S-16/1 of 14 December 1989, contains the text of the statement released by the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) at the conclusion of its meeting held at Lusaka, Zambia, from 14 to 16 February 1990.

The views expressed are those of the authors.]

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The National Executive Committee of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) met at Lusaka, Zambia, from 14 to 16 February 1990 to consider the situation arising from the decisions announced on 2 and 10 February 1990 by Pretoria's State President, Mr. F. W. de Klerk, affecting the system of repression against the democratic movement which the white National Party régime had instituted during the 42 years of its illegitmate rule of South Africa.

As is known, Mr. de Klerk also spelt out policy positions of his party and Government which he presented as being intended to address the issue of ending the system of apartheid.

During its deliberations, the National Executive Committee benefited from proposals submitted to its meeting by the President of ANC, Mr. Oliver Tambo, and other leaders of ANC based within South Africa.

It reaffirmed the continuing and urgent responsibility of ANC and all other democratic and anti-apartheid forces, both South African and international, to continue the struggle to end the apartheid system as quickly as possible.

The National Executive Committee recognized the unbanning of ANC and other organizations as an important factor which contributes to the creation of a climate conducive to negotiations. It also viewed in a positive light other measures, such as the partial lifting of the press restrictions and the rescinding of banning orders affecting various persons.

It welcomed the suspension of the death penalty as an important first step which must, without delay, lead to the unconditional release of all political activists sentenced to death and an end to the barbaric practice of capital punishment.

The National Executive Committee, however, also concluded that the Pretoria régime has not yet created a climate conducive to negotiations, as has been called for by the overwhelming majority of the people of South Africa and the international community.

It therefore calls on this régime specifically to release all political prisoners and detainees, end the state of emergency, repeal all repressive legislation, halt all political trials and remove all troops from the townships.

To help to achieve these objectives in the shortest possible time, it resolved to meet Mr. de Klerk as soon as possible to discuss with him the need to address these issues so that a climate conducive to negotiations is created. Its delegation will be composed of the leaders of ANC based within the country, as well as members of the National Executive Committee based outside the country.

The National Executive Committee also considers it of vital importance that it should meet the leaders of ANC who are inside South Africa, as well as those of the Mass Democratic Movement and other anti-apartheid forces. It therefore resolved to send a delegation into South Africa as soon as the necessary arrangements have been made.

It further resolved that it is important to begin immediately the work of re-establishing ANC within the country. It has therefore constituted the leaders within the country into an organ under the National Executive Committee charged with the task of carrying out this work, working under the chairmanship of Comrade Walter Sisulu.

The National Executive Committee calls on all members of ANC, as well as those of our compatriots who had already taken steps to constitute themselves into ANC units, to work directly with and under this leadership collective.

The National Executive Committee resolved to take immediate steps to prepare for the organized return to South Africa of the leadership and membership of ANC.

It also recognized that over the years a serious brain drain had occurred with the emigration from South Africa of many people who were opposed to the apartheid system. It therefore resolved to take steps to encourage the return of these exiles as well, so that they can contribute to the democratic transformation of our country and make an effective contribution to the reconstruction and development of post-apartheid South Africa.

In the light of the new developments, the National Executive Committee resolved that the next National Conference of ANC will be held inside South Africa, beginning on 16 December 1990. The planned National Consultative Conference originally scheduled for June this year will therefore no longer take place. Conference preparations will, however, continue, both inside and outside the country.

The National Executive Committee welcomed the unbanning of the South African Communist Party. It reaffirmed the importance of the alliance of ANC, the South African Communist Party and the organized workers of our country. It resolved that this historic alliance will continue to function with the necessary restructuring having taken place to meet the new situation.

It also reviewed the relations of ANC with other democratic and anti-apartheid formations within South Africa. As already indicated, it resolved to enter into discussions with these to assess the recent developments. It reiterated its view that, at this stage, the United Democratic Front and its affiliates should continue to function and mobilize their respective constituencies.

The National Executive Committee is gravely concerned at the continuing violence, especially in Natal and Uitenhage. It reaffirmed the necessity to take urgent steps to stop this destructive conflict. It therefore confirmed earlier decisions that the leadership within the country should intervene immediately to end this fratricidal carnage. It calls on all those who have previously blocked attempts to find a solution to co-operate with these leaders in the interests of life itself.

The National Executive Committee reiterated the fact that the masses of our people continue to suffer under the apartheid system. It restated that, even when a climate for negotiations is created, this will not mean that this system will have been abolished. Therefore, the struggle for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa must and will continue.

In this regard, it considered with all due seriousness suggestions that it should unilaterally suspend the armed struggle. While appreciating the sincerity of purpose underlying these suggestions, it however confirmed that the only just and correct way to approach this question is to adhere to the positions contained in the Harare Declaration as well as the Declaration on South Africa adopted at the conclusion of the sixteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly. It therefore reiterates that upon the creation of a climate conducive to negotiations, ANC will seek to negotiate with the Pretoria régime a suspension of hostilities by both sides.

The National Executive Committee views with grave concern and strongly condemns the continuing campaign of repression carried out by the South African and bantustan police and armies. The state of emergency and repressive legislation, such as the Internal Security Act, which have been maintained, legalize and encourage this campaign of terror against the people.

ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe have a responsibility to defend the people against this terror. There can therefore be no question of a unilateral moratorium or a suspension of the armed struggle in a situation in which the violence of the apartheid system continues unabated. The Pretoria régime has an urgent responsibility to take all the necessary measures to end this violence and thus create the situation when the present obligation on our part to act in defence of the people, arms in hand, will fall away.

The National Executive Committee reaffirms the need for the continuation of mass political action to achieve the objectives contained in the resolutions of the Conference for a Democratic Future and the statement of the National Executive Committee issued on 8 January 1990, to realize the intention of this Year of People's Action for a Democratic South Africa.

The international community imposed sanctions against South Africa with the express purpose of ending the apartheid system. There can therefore be no justification for lifting these sanctions at this stage. The National Executive Committee strongly condemns the position taken by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on this issue.

These positions not only hinder the process leading to the speedy liquidation of the apartheid system, but are a betrayal of decisions of the European Community and the United Nations General Assembly, to which the United Kingdom Government is party, that sanctions would not be lifted until profound and irreversible changes had taken place, in keeping with the objectives contained in the United Nations Declaration on South Africa, adopted unanimously last December.

The National Executive Committee therefore calls on the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the European Community to reject the call of the Thatcher Government to lift sanctions and thus repulse its efforts to weaken the international struggle to end the apartheid system.

The National Executive Committee reaffirmed that our country's problems can only be solved when South Africa has been transformed into a non-racial democracy, in which the fundamental rights of all our people, both black and white, would be guaranteed. It therefore calls on all forces committed to this perspective further to consolidate their unity and continue to act together to advance towards the common goal.

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